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THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

Ἡ δὲ τοῦ Θεοῦ αἵ ἡρώεις, ἀγῶνιστὲς αἱ ἀνὸς ἀνὰ θεοῦ τοῦ ναοῦ.

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JOHN HUSS.

ALMOST every traveller has experienced the influence of the powerful yet mysterious interest which is excited in the mind, by the sight of places that have been the scenes of important events in the history of the world, or associated with the lives of illustrious men. Dr. Johnson, the great English moralist, has recorded, in a well-known passage of his writings, his contempt for the man whose patriotism would remain cold upon the field of Marathon, or whose piety would not be warmed amidst the ruins of Iona; and a modern poet has illustrated the pleasurable feelings arising from such associations in the following beautiful lines:—

"And hence the charm historic scenes impart,
Hence Tiber awes, and Avon melts the heart.
Aerial forms in Tempe's classic vale
Glance through the gloom, and whisper in the gale.
'Twas ever thus. As now at Virgil's tomb
We bless the shade and bid the verdure bloom;
So Tully paused, amid the wrecks of Time,
On the rude stone to trace the truth sublime;
When at his feet, in honoured dust disclosed,
The immortal Sage of Syracuse reposed.
And as he long in sweet delusion hung,
Where once a Plato taught, a Pindar sung;
Who now but meets him musing, as he roves
His ruined Tusculan's romantic groves?
In Rome's great Forum, who but hears him roll
His moral thunders o'er the subject soul?"

If, however, a permanent celebrity is justly and naturally claimed for localities dignified by their connection with names that have become illustrious in the records of literature and science, or places that have been ennobled by deeds of patriotic heroism, an equal, if not greater interest surely belongs to those memorable spots where the courageous advocates of religious freedom have suffered and died in the cause of truth. A greater interest, we say, belongs to such scenes—an interest proportioned to the more momentous and lasting importance of the principles that are at stake. The fruits of patriotism and philosophy may perish and pass away. The victory of Marathon did not save the degenerate Greeks of later times from the yoke of Turkish oppression; and the writings of Plato were well nigh lost amid the darkness and barbarism of the middle ages; but the truths that relate to man's immortal destiny are endowed with an enduring and ever-living power. The names of those who have laid down their lives, to rescue mankind from the thralldom of ignorance and superstition, become, as it were, household words; they belong not to one nation or people only, but they are the common property of the human race. An inexpressible charm hangs around each spot which is hallowed by their sufferings; and their dying words are treasured up, and entwined with the memorials of earth's greatest and noblest benefactors.

The stranger who visits at the present day the imperial city of Constance, situated near the place where the Rhine, flowing out of the lake of that name, forms the boundary between Germany and Switzerland, has pointed out to him in the museum of that ancient town many memorials of the stirring events which happened in that city in the early part of the fifteenth century. He sees the chair of state

which was filled at the Council of Constance by Sigismund, Emperor of Germany. He sees the large balloting-box, adorned with gilded carving now tarnished with age, and divided into five compartments, in which were deposited the votes of the electors who took part in the nomination of Pope Martin V.^b But, perhaps, the most remarkable object in the museum is a small wooden structure, only a few feet square, the exact model of the prison in which the illustrious Reformer, JOHN HUSS, spent the closing weeks of his life, and from which he was at last removed only to suffer a painful and ignominious death. His dying words, breathing forgiveness to his cruel enemies and unswerving trust in the all-sufficient merits of his Redeemer, are inscribed upon this interesting relic; and, stranger though he was by birth, his memory is still held in reverence by the inhabitants of Constance. We propose to lay before our readers in the following pages a sketch of the chief events in the life of this remarkable man; premising a brief account of the Papal schism of the fourteenth century, with which the personal history of John Huss is so closely intermingled.

If ever there was an event which should have destroyed the idea that one supreme infallible head was established over the Christian Church by Divine appointment, and that this head was the Pope of Rome, it was the well-known schism which commenced in the year 1378, and which lasted, with but little intermission, more than fifty years. During that lengthened period, the world saw with astonishment two, and sometimes even three persons, each claiming to be the infallible representative of Christ upon earth; each boasting of the support of cardinals and even councils, and fulminating the bitterest anathemas against all his opponents. To this day, even Roman Catholic writers are not agreed who were the true and who the false popes. Whole generations of Christians lived and died while this schism lasted. Bishops, priests, and people knew not where to look for the supposed infallible centre of Christian unity. The conduct of each of the rival popes, as we shall presently see, only proved one thing clearly to demonstration, namely, that they were, one and all, pre-eminently unfit to be the successors of the Apostles. Is it possible to believe that such a scandalous state of things would have been permitted to last for more than half a century, if it had really been the design of Divine Providence, that communion with one visible head, in the person of the Bishop of Rome, should be, for all time, a necessary bond of unity—obligatory, as a condition of salvation, upon all professing members of the Christian Church? The supposition is manifestly untenable.

The pope with whom this schism commenced was Urban VI., who was elected at Rome in April, A.D., 1378. At that time France and Italy were at strife, each wishing to secure the popedom for itself. Urban VI. belonged to the Italian party; and the French cardinals, irritated by his imperiousness and ungovernable temper, met at Anagni in the following August. By encyclical letters dated from that place, they announced to the faithful in all Christendom that the election of Urban VI. was carried by force and the fear of death; that through the same force and fear he had been inaugurated, enthroned, and crowned; that he was an apostate, an accursed antichrist. They pronounced him a tyrannical usurper of the popedom, a wolf that had stolen into the fold; and they called upon him to descend at once from the throne which he occupied without canonical title.^c

On September 20, at Fondi, Robert of Geneva, a man of noble birth, was elected pope in the presence of almost all the cardinals who had chosen and inaugurated Urban VI. The new pope, or anti-pope, took the title of Clement VII. The Italians bitterly taunted the mockery of this name, borne by one who had formerly been a Captain of free companies, and was supposed to have been the

author of a cruel massacre at Cesena. His partial biographer ascribes to him extraordinary activity of body, and endurance of fatigue, joined with much sagacity and experience; but of learning, devotion, austerity, holiness, charity, there is not a word.^d

The authority of Urban VI. was acknowledged throughout the greater part of Europe, except France; but his cruelty and avarice were so great that they alienated from him the affections of his warmest adherents. He had created twenty-six new cardinals, in order to counterbalance the number of those who supported his rival; but, growing suspicious of several of them, he inveigled them to Nocera, under the pretence of holding a consistory, and threw six of the most learned into a pestilential dungeon, where they were exposed to hunger, thirst, cold, and reptiles.

The treatment which these cardinals subsequently underwent would scarcely be believed if it were not recorded by an eye-witness.^e After three days they were submitted to the torture; that of two of them is described with horrible minuteness by the unwilling witness. The Cardinal di Sangro was stripped almost naked, and hoisted thrice by the pulley; Buttillo, the Pope's nephew, stood laughing at his agonies. The cardinal bitterly reproached himself with the tortures which he himself had inflicted on archbishops, bishops, and abbots, the partisans of the Antipope, for the cause of Urban. The executioner was a fierce ruffian, who had been a pirate, and was now Prior of the Hospitallers. The Cardinal of Venice, an old, feeble, and infirm man, had not to suffer the same bitter self-reproach as Di Sangro, yet he was tortured with even worse cruelty from morning to dinner time. The Pope, while the tortures were going on, was heard below in the garden reciting aloud his Breviary, that the executioner might be encouraged by his presence! Such was the character of the first of the rival Popes!

We have not space to describe at length the revolting scenes of cruelty and lawless violence which disgraced this gloomy period of history, and which, we may confidently assert, would never have taken place if the supposed necessity of the Papacy, for securing the visible unity of the Christian Church, had not been inculcated and believed. Schism could not but produce persecution and victims of persecution, when it was a stern acknowledged duty to hate, punish, and exterminate schismatics. Everywhere might be found divisions, spoliations, and even bloodshed; battles for churches and monasteries, ejected and usurping clergy, dispossessed and intrusive abbots and bishops. Among all other causes of discord arose this the most discordant, demoralizing in all its results, and affording a ready pretext for innumerable acts of rapacity and fraud.

Urban VI. died in 1389, and was succeeded by Boniface IX. The charge against his fame is insatiable avarice, joined with flagrant and shameless simony. He compelled the candidates for bishoprics and rich abbays, to pay in advance the annates or first-fruits of their preferments. Some of these applicants never got possession of the benefice for which they had paid; but this was a matter of supreme indifference to Boniface, as he could sell it again. Petitions already granted were sometimes cancelled in favour of a higher bidder; the Pope treated the lower offer as an attempt to defraud him. In the same year the Secretary, Theodoric à Niem, had known the same benefice sold, in the course of one week, to several successive claimants. The benefices were so openly sold that, if money was not at hand, the Pope would receive the price in kind, in grain, horses, oxen, sheep, and swine! ^f

Scenes such as these, enacted in the face of Europe, loudly called for a thorough reformation of the Church,

^a "It is plain, from hence," says the quaint old writer, Theodoric à Niem, "that the election of Robert of Geneva to be pope, never proceeded from the Holy Spirit, or from pure consciences." (Unde potest elici, quod illa electio a Spiritu Sancto et puris conscientiis non processit.)

^b Theodoric à Niem. The authorities are given at length in Milman's History of Latin Christianity, vol. vi., p. 26, to which learned work we are largely indebted.

^c Idemque Urbanus Interim in horto inferius ambulabat, alie legendo officium, ita quod eum legentem nos in aula audiebamus, vocans dictum Basilium per hoc reddere sollicitum quod mandatum de diligenter torquendo Cardinalem non negligeret.—A Niem, c. lii., p. 44. Apud Milman, vi. 27.

^d A Niem, li., c. 7 to 12, and Gobelius, pp. 316, 318, apud Milman, ut supra.

^b The five compartments were for the use of the five nations into which the members of the council were divided, viz.—I. The Italians; II. The Germans; III. The French; IV. The English; V. The Spaniards. It is worthy of notice, that the learned Archbishop Usher, in his tract on the Religion of the Ancient Irish, has adduced some ancient testimonies to prove that the claim of the English to be counted a distinct nation at the Council of Constance, was allowed mainly in virtue of the fact, that the English king was also lord of Ireland, which had always been considered to be quite distinct from the other provinces of the Roman empire.

^c Vide Raynaldus, sub anno 1378. The document is also given in the Gersoniana.

both in its head and members. When Boniface IX. was invited, however, to summon a General Council, he laughed to scorn this reasonable proposal. "Some perverse men," he exclaimed, "trusting in the arm of flesh against the Lord, cry out for a council in order to put an end to the schism. Oh, damned and damnable impiety!"¹ He thought, perhaps, and not unreasonably, that a council would put some check upon his ill-gotten gains, if it did not deprive him of the Papedom altogether.

Clement VII died in 1394. Charles V., who was then King of France, sent a letter to the cardinals assembled at Avignon, prohibiting them from proceeding to a new election. The wary cardinals, lest they should seem to despise the king's command, first hurried over the election of a new anti-pope, Peter di Luna (who took the title of Benedict XIII.), and then opened the royal letter.²

Benedict XIII. proved a worthy rival, at least in cruelty, to Urban VI. He was kept in a kind of imprisonment for five years by the cardinals and wealthier citizens of Avignon, but at last he managed to effect his escape. If tradition be true, however, the Pope had his revenge for this indignity. He invited the principal citizens of Avignon to a feast of reconciliation, in a large hall, and while they were assembled he set fire to the building, and burned them all alive.³

Benedict professed his eager desire to extinguish the schism; and, in proof of his sincerity, he sent an embassy to his rival at Rome. Boniface refused to receive the ambassadors but as Pope. They were admitted to a consistory, and proposed a free conference, at some appointed place, to discuss the rival claims. Boniface answered with much pride, "that he alone was pope; Peter di Luna was only an anti pope." "At least," rejoined the offended ambassadors, "our master is guiltless of simony." The insult struck to the heart of Boniface. He retired to his chamber, and was dead ere two days had elapsed.

Submission to a foreign pontiff was the last thought of the Italian cardinals. They first elected Innocent VII., and then, on his death, they chose Gregory XII. The two rival Popes endeavoured, as usual, to undermine each other; but, at last, Christendom became weary of this miserable game of chicanery, stratagem, and falsehood, played by two old men, each above seventy years old. The college of cardinals, by their own authority, summoned the Council of Pisa, in the year 1409; and, after a long and elaborate discussion, both Popes were declared contumacious, and deprived of their pontifical dignities. One prelate in particular, the Bishop of Sisteron, caused much astonishment among his audience by asserting that they were no more Popes than his old shoes. He called them worse than Annas and Caiaphas, and compared them to the devils in hell.⁴ Such was the first solemn, deliberate, authoritative act by which a General Council assumed a power superior to the Papacy, which broke the long tradition of the indefeasible, irresponsible sovereignty of the Pope over Christendom.

The Council of Pisa then proceeded to elect a new Pope; and their choice fell on Alexander V. At his death, after a pontificate of ten months, it was announced that the conclave had elected Balthasar Cossa, under the title of John XXIII. This individual was much worse than any of his predecessors. He had been a pirate in his early years; and when he was appointed Governor of Bologna by Boniface IX., his extortion and debaucheries might have put to shame the most shameless of the Italian nobles of his day. The schism burst out with fresh vehemence; the Popes deposed by the Council of Pisa renewed their claims; and at length, in the year 1414, the Emperor Sigismund, weary of these discussions, and urged on by his wisest councillors, avowed his steadfast resolution to terminate this schism in the Church, and to compel the reformation in the clergy, so imperiously demanded by all Christendom. This could be accomplished only by a General Council, invested with greater authority, and more fully representing the hierarchy and laity of the Christian Church, than that of Pisa; and after considerable discussion, the Emperor and cardinals fixed on the city of Constance as the place where the council was to be held.

From the month of June to the Feast of All Saints, the day named for the opening of the Council, the quiet streets of this ancient city were disturbed by the first preparations for the important events which were to take place within her walls. The roads leading to Constance were crowded with all ranks and orders, ecclesiastics and laymen, Sovereign princes and Ambassadors, Archbishops, theologians, and delegates from renowned universities. On the steep slopes of the Alps were seen winding down,

now emerging from the autumn-tinted chestnut groves, now lost again, the rich cavalcades of the Cardinals, the Prelates, the Princes of Italy, each with their martial guard or their ecclesiastical pomp. The blue lake was studded with boats, conveying the bishops and nobles of the Tyrol and Eastern Germany. Along the whole course of the Rhine from Cologne, from England and France, marched abbots and monks, doctors of law and celebrated schoolmen, following the upward course of the stream. Day after day the air was alive with the standards of Princes, the banners of Imperial cities, or the silver croziers of the lordly Prelates. Night after night the silence was broken by the trumpeters announcing the arrival of some mighty Duke, or the tinkling mule-bells of some lowlier caravan. All ranks, all orders, all professions, with their various attire, habits, manners, and language, seemed to be crowded into one single city.⁵

It was with considerable difficulty that the Emperor Sigismund prevailed upon John XXIII. to appear at the opening of the Council. Although he could rely implicitly on the votes of the Italian bishops who accompanied him, yet he had deep misgivings (which the event fully justified) that the Council would act towards him as the Council of Pisa had done towards his two rivals.⁶ The Emperor, however, at last succeeded in overcoming the fears of the Pontiff, in a meeting at Cremona.⁷ And when John XXIII. entered Constance, on the 28th of October, 1414, the magistrates and clergy received him with every sign of respect and spiritual loyalty.

On the 3rd of November, another arrival caused unusual excitement within the crowded walls of Constance. There entered the city a pale, thin man, in mean attire, from the distant kingdom of Bohemia; he was escorted by three nobles of his country, with a great troop of other followers, and he came under a special safe-conduct from the Emperor, which guaranteed in the amplest terms his safe entrance and safe departure from the imperial city. This was none other than JOHN HUSS, the famous Bohemian Reformer.

In a former number⁸ we gave our readers some account of the zealous efforts made by Wycliffe in the course of the fourteenth century to oppose the errors and vices of the Romish clergy in England. The marriage of Anne, sister of Wenzel, king of Bohemia, to Richard II. of England had brought the two kingdoms into close connection exactly at the time when the doctrines of Wycliffe were making their most rapid progress. John Huss, being a man of learning, eloquence, and blameless morals, was appointed preacher in the University chapel and confessor to the Queen Sophia. So long as his sermons denounced the vices of the world, the monks and friars were among his most admiring hearers; but when he began to condemn the abuses of the Church, and the luxury, pride, and licentiousness of the clergy, their admiration turned to animosity. Just at this time a scholar of John Huss returned from his studies at Oxford, and brought with him many writings of Wycliffe, in which he attacked the doctrines of Romanism no less than the corruptions of the clergy. John Huss at first read the books with suspicion and dislike; but, on more careful study, he found them full of valuable, but neglected, truths, which gradually worked their way into his mind, and influenced his public teaching.

The Archbishop of Prague took the alarm, and issued his sentence of condemnation, threatening all who should promulgate the tenets of Wycliffe with the heretic's death—the stake. Huss was quiet for a time, but the condition of the University did not permit him long to bask in peace; for he was the champion not of Wycliffe's opinions alone, which were now forcing themselves into popularity, but of the Bohemians against the German students. The German professors had taken part with the Archbishop in the implied censure of Huss. After a violent struggle the Bohemian party triumphed; the Germans abandoned the city, and Huss became the Rector of the University of Prague.

He now preached boldly and without reserve the doctrines of the English Reformer. The Council of Pisa, as we have seen, had pronounced a sentence of deposition against the rival Popes, Benedict XIII. and Gregory XII. The King, Huss, and the Bohemians adhered to the council, and Huss was now emboldened to assail the Papal power itself. The Archbishop of Prague, who adhered to Gregory, complained of Huss to the King, and received the following reply:—"So long as Master Huss preached against us of the world, you rejoiced, and declared that the Spirit of God spoke in him. It is now your turn."

When the Council of Pisa appointed Alexander V. as

Pope, the Archbishop, taking fresh courage, obtained from the new Pope a bull for the suppression of the Wycliffite doctrines, and having collected no less than two hundred writings of the hateful English heresiarch, committed them publicly to the flames. Huss, however, continued to preach, and appealed from the Pope to Christ Himself, the one final, unerring Judge.⁹ Meanwhile, as has been already mentioned, Alexander V. was succeeded by John XXIII.; and among the first acts of Pope John was a citation to John Huss, a man of blameless life and irreproachable morals, to appear before the tribunal of a Pope charged, at least, with every imaginable crime.

The King and the Bohemian nation would not permit Huss to cross the Alps, and news shortly arrived that the Reformer was excommunicated, and the city of Prague placed under an interdict. Huss withdrew for a time from the city; but, by his eloquent preachings, he filled the whole of Bohemia with indignation against the abuses of the Romish hierarchy. At length, as we have seen, the Emperor Sigismund announced his intention to summon the Council of Constance, to effect a reform of the Church both in its head and members. It was not for Huss to stand aloof from such an assembly. He had appealed to a council; and, if his opinions were true, he could not shrink from bringing them before an assembly which contained the most consummate theologians of Christendom; yet he was not without dark misgivings as to the result. He left a letter only to be opened in case of his death at Constance; and his parting address to his followers enjoined them to maintain their faith, and to pray earnestly for his safe return.

At Nuremberg, on his way to Constance, he was met by three Bohemian nobles, who brought from Spire the imperial safe-conduct, couched in the fullest terms, guaranteeing his safe entrance into the city, and his safe return. Some time after his arrival he was graciously received by Pope John XXIII. Nothing was said of the ban of excommunication which still hung over him, and the strongest expressions of assurance were attributed to the Pope:—"If he had slain my brother, I would not permit, as far as in my power, any harm to be done to him in Constance."¹⁰ Yet, notwithstanding this assurance—notwithstanding his appeal to the imperial safe-conduct,—notwithstanding the protest of his noble Bohemian protector, John de Chlum, Huss was arraigned for heresy, and committed to prison, (at first in the Bishop's palace, and then in the Dominican convent,) within four weeks after his arrival at Constance. The Pope said that this act was done without his authority. At any rate, he found it expedient to disclaim it.

John de Chlum at once took bold and active measures for the release of Huss. He communicated this gross violation of the imperial safe-conduct to Sigismund, who was on his way from his coronation at Aix-la-Chapelle. The Emperor broke out into wrath; he gave orders that if the Pope and cardinals did not obey his mandate, the doors of the prison should be opened by force. But no one ventured to invade the Dominican cloister, and the Council yet respected the ordinances of the Pope and cardinals.

On Christmas eve tidings arrived that Sigismund had reached Oberlingen, on the northern shore of the lake, and before morning dawn he entered Constance. The case of John Huss was the first question on which he had to decide. Sigismund was placed in a position of considerable difficulty. If he abandoned Huss to his enemies, he violated his own safe-conduct. Such a flagrant breach of faith could admit of no excuse; perfidy is doubly perfidious in an emperor. On the other hand, John Huss had been already arraigned as a heretic, and the Pope, the cardinals, and the Council had committed themselves to that arraignment. If Sigismund had released the prisoner with a high hand; if he had in the slightest degree infringed upon the recognised province of the hierarchy to be the sole judges in cases of heresy, Pope John would, probably, have broken up the Council, and all the Emperor's hopes of restoring peace to the Church, and effecting a reformation among the clergy, would be overthrown.

Moreover, it must be remembered, in justice to Sigismund, that the doctrine that no promise, no oath made to a heretic was binding, had been confirmed by long usage, by the decrees of Popes, and by the assent of all ecclesiastics. The Church of Rome has since seen fit to disavow this pernicious maxim by the mouth of some of her most eminent divines; but, at the time of which we are speaking, the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics had hardly been questioned, and certainly never repudiated. At length Sigismund yielded, perhaps not without self-reproach. He consented to violate his own safe-conduct; and John Huss was thrown into irons, and imprisoned in a dungeon of the fortress of Goleben, under the custody of the Bishop of Constance.

John XXIII. did not long reap the fruits of his perfidy. Deputies from the anti-popes were formally received by the

¹ Sed dicunt impii perversores, in carnali brachio contra potentiam Domini confidentes, fiat concilium, ut schisma sedetur. O Damna et damanda impietas!—Relatio de S. Denys, l. xiii. 14.

² Sir Walter Scott, in his "Tales of a Grandfather," tells a story of a Highland chieftain, who acted somewhat in the same fashion as the French cardinals above described. He had taken prisoner a neighbouring chieftain, and thrown him into a dungeon. One day he saw a nobleman of rank and influence approaching his castle. Guessing that he came to intercede for his prisoner, he ordered the latter to be privately put to death. The nobleman, as he expected, requested that the prisoner might be set at liberty, and given up to his care. "I am sorry," replied the old chieftain, "that you did not come an hour sooner. He is unfortunately no longer alive; but his dead body is heartily at your service."

³ Sismondi, Hist. des Français, xii. p. 380.

⁴ L'Enfant, Hist. du Conc. de Pise, p. 273.

⁵ We have borrowed largely from the eloquent pages of Milman, describing the opening of the Council of Constance.

⁶ "John came to Constance," says the old chronicler, "accompanied by many Italian prelates, that he might preserve himself in the papacy by a plurality of votes." (Johannes venit Constantiam, cum multis prelatibus Italicis, ut per votorum pluralitatem se conservaret in Papatu.—Ebenendorfer ii., § 25.)

⁷ This meeting took place in the latter end of the year 1413. An incident had nearly taken place there, which, by preventing the Council of Constance, might have changed the fortunes of the Latin Church. Gabrino Fondoli, the lord of Cremona, entertained the Pope and Emperor with distinguished hospitality; and, during the visit, he led them up to the top of a lofty tower, to survey the rich plains of Lombardy. On his death bed, Fondoli confessed the sin of which he deeply repented, that he had resisted the temptation, and had not hurled pope and emperor down, and so secured himself an immortal name.—Vide Muratori, Annal. sub anno 1413.

⁸ Vide CATHOLIC LAYMAN, Vol. v. p. 121.

⁹ The reader will not fail to remark the close similarity which exists between the early history of Huss and that of Luther. Both were led on step by step, and apparently against their will, to expose the doctrinal errors and corruptions of the Court of Rome.

¹⁰ Etiam Johannes Huss fratrem sibi germanum occidisset, se tamen nullo modo commissurum, quantum in ipso statum esset, ut aliqua ei fiat injuria, quamdiu Constantia esset.—Von der Hardt, iv., p. 11.

Council of Constance. The demand for John's resignation, which had been at first a low and timid murmur, soon became the general clamour. The charges formerly made against the abominable life of the Pope were revived in their unmitigated blackness. Robert Hallam, Bishop of Salisbury, at the head of the English bishops, urged with much vigour the necessity of a searching reformation of all orders in the Church. The honest islander broke out into righteous indignation, and declared that the Pope deserved to be burnt at the stake. After some delay, John gave a conditional promise of resignation, but it was notorious that he meditated escape from the city. The Cardinal St. Angelo, one of his adherents, attempted to pass the gates, but was arrested by the guard; and the Pope, thereupon, loudly complained of the violation of the imperial safe-conduct, which, in the case of John Huss, he himself had trampled under foot. At length the Pope succeeded in making his escape, but the Council, nothing daunted, determined to proceed to extremities. They fixed on the gates of the city, and on the doors of all the churches, a formal citation, to Pope John XXIII. to answer for the maintenance of the schism; for heresy, simony, and dilapidation of the estates of the Papacy; for the scandals and notorious criminalities of his life and conversation.

The time assigned for the Pope's appearance having expired, the Council proceeded in its course. Seventy charges were exhibited; and never, probably, were seventy more awful accusations brought against man than against the so-called vicar of Christ. The Cardinal St. Mark made a feeble attempt to repel the charge of heresy; against the darker charges no one spoke a word. Before the final decree, sixteen of those of the most indescribable depravity were dropped, out of respect not to the Pope, but to public decency and the dignity of the office. On the remaining undefended fifty-four charges, the Council deliberately pronounced the sentence of deposition. A body of three hundred armed men went to seize the fugitive. He was first brought to the castle of Rodolfzell, when his sentence was read to him by two cardinals, the justice of which he fully acknowledged. He was then, by a strange coincidence, brought to the strong castle of Gotleben, where John Huss had been for some months pining in unmerited imprisonment.

The prosecution of Huss had been revived in the Council almost simultaneously with the deposition of Pope John. His enemies employed the utmost industry in collecting obnoxious passages from his writings, on which to frame articles of accusation against him. On the 5th of June he was brought in chains before the Council. His works were presented to him, and the articles of accusation were read. Huss calmly declared himself ready to maintain his opinions by Scripture and the Fathers, but an outburst of abuse and mockery compelled the Council to adjourn its proceedings.

Three times Huss was brought before the Council. Thirty-nine articles were exhibited against him, and the Council sat annoyed and embarrassed, while Huss appealed triumphantly to St. Augustine and St. Bernard in proof of his assertion, that "the pontiff who lives not the life of Peter is no vicar of Christ, but the forerunner of anti-christ," and that "the slave of avarice was the successor, not of Peter, but of Judas Iscariot." Huss was guilty of the unpardonable rashness of discomfiting and perplexing his adversaries. The Emperor urged him to make unqualified submission to the Council, and to abjure all his errors. Huss replied, with firm humility, that he could not abjure errors of which he was not convinced. Many things charged against him, he said, were forged, many perverted from their true meaning, and he could not retract without perjury to his own conscience. "It is better for me," he concluded, "to die, than, by avoiding momentary punishment, to fall into the hands of God, and perhaps into everlasting fire. I have appealed to Jesus Christ, the one all-powerful and all-just Judge; to Him I commit my cause, who will judge every man, not according to false witnesses and erring councils, but according to truth and men's desert."

The Council at last met in the cathedral, and the Bishop of Lodi preached from the text, "That the body of sin might be destroyed" (Rom. vi. 6). He placed Huss in the same rank with Arius and Sabellius, and closed his sermon with extravagant praises of the Emperor. "It is thy glorious office," he exclaimed, "to destroy heresies and schism, especially this obstinate heretic." At these words he pointed to Huss, who was kneeling in an elevated place, and in fervent prayer.

The Bishop of Concordia rose to read the two sentences, one condemning the writings, the other the person of John Huss to the flames. Huss was commanded to kneel to hear his own sentence. It stated that the Council, having the fear of God before its eyes, declared Huss a real and manifest heresiarch, who had advanced doctrines offensive, rash, and seditious, had trampled under foot the power of the keys and the censures of the Church, and had scandalised all true Christians by his appeal to Jesus Christ. Huss broke in, "I have ever desired, and still desire, to be instructed out of the holy Scriptures." The bishop concluded with

condemning him to be degraded and despoiled of his orders. Huss rose from his knees and uttered a fervent prayer to God to pardon his enemies. Some of the older priests, even bishops, looked sternly at him, and laughed his prayers to scorn. He was stripped of his robes, the tonsure was effaced, a high paper crown, daubed over with devils, was set on his head, and the assembled bishops concluded with the words—"We devote thy soul to the devils in hell." So the Church made over the heresiarch to the secular arm. The Emperor delivered him to the imperial vicar, the vicar to the magistrates of Constance, the magistrates to the executioners.

The place of execution was a meadow without the walls. Huss knelt down and prayed aloud—"Lord Jesus, for Thy sake I endure with patience this cruel death. I beseech Thee to pardon mine enemies." He recited several Psalms with the perpetual burthen, "Lord Jesus, have mercy upon me. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit." The whole multitude from the city had assembled to witness the execution. "We know not," said the people, "what this man may have done; we only know that his prayers to God are excellent." He was tied fast by an old rusty chain to the stake, which was fixed on a platform. The fire blazed up; it is said that an old woman was busy in heaping up the wood. With the last feeble sounds of his voice he was heard to chaunt verses of the Psalms, and to pray to the Redeemer. All the remains of the body were torn to pieces, even his clothes were thrown into the fire, and the ashes were gathered and cast into the lake, lest his disciples should make reliques of them. But their faithful piety scraped together the earth around the pile, and carried it to Bohemia.

So perished John Huss as an obstinate, incorrigible heretic, but his heresy has never been clearly defined. It was not a denial of any of the great truths of Christianity, nor any of those peculiar Roman tenets of belief rejected afterwards by the German and English Reformers. On Transubstantiation, the Communion in one kind, the Worship of the Saints and the Virgin Mary, Huss was as orthodox, in the Romish sense, as any of his accusers. He was one of the first distinguished martyrs for Christian liberty, and freedom of opinion; he had raised his testimony against that supreme ecclesiastical dominion which so long ruled the mind of man; and he at length fell a victim to the power of the Roman hierarchy, whose authority he had successfully resisted.

We cannot conclude without inviting the attention of our readers to the remarkable contrast which is presented in the foregoing narrative. Two men, both bearing the name of John, were arraigned before the Council of Constance for different violations of the laws of God and man. Pope John XXIII. was accused of the very foulest crimes. According to the sentence of the Council, he had been guilty from his youth, and during his whole life, of licentiousness which passes belief, promiscuous concubinage, incest, the violation of nuns; of the most atrocious cruelties, murder, massacre, the most grinding tyranny, unglutted avarice, unblushing simony; inasmuch that (in the language of the Council) he was commonly known by the name of the *Devil Incarnate*. Yet, after his deposition from the popedom, he was raised again to the rank of a cardinal, and permitted to close his days in peace, and even in honour.

The second, John Huss, of life blameless to austerity, absolutely unimpeachable in his morals, was accused of having denounced the corruptions and vices of the clergy, and of erroneous belief in transubstantiation. The latter charge he distinctly denied, and repelled to the satisfaction of most present; and, although it is even now difficult to define or apprehend the precise delinquencies or errors of which he was arraigned and found guilty, yet, notwithstanding the protection of the imperial safe-conduct, he was seized, imprisoned, and burnt at the stake. The judicial murder of the Bohemian Reformer (for it deserves no milder name) will for ever remain an indelible blot on the boasted justice and impartiality of the Church of Rome.

EGO ABSOLVO TE—I ABSOLVE THEE.—No. I.

SOME of our readers who have taken an interest in our articles upon the ancient Liturgies have asked us to treat in the same way some of the other formularies of the Church, and to show what was practised in the first ages; and they especially ask us to do this with the form of absolution as practised in the Church of Rome. We gladly comply with their request, thinking this method peculiarly suited to the case of absolution.

The Church of Rome holds that penance is a sacrament of the Gospel, instituted by Christ Himself. The Council of Trent has expressly declared in what "the form" of this sacrament consists:—"The holy Synod also teaches that

* Throughout the greater part of the above, we have nearly transcribed the graphic narrative of Milman, who observes, that the whole description of the last hours of Huss is from Reichenhal, and the two nameless biographers of Huss, who were all eye-witnesses.

* Unus articulus qui fuit in ordine sextus plura vitia conclusit sub hac forma. Item quod dictus Johannes fuit et est pauperum oppressor; justitiae persecutor; iniquitatum columna; simoniacorum status; carnis cultor; vitiorum fex; a virtutibus peregrinus; infamie speculum; et omnium malitiarum profundus admonitor; adeo et in tantum scandalizans ecclesiam Christi, quod inter Christi fideles vitam et mores cognoscentes vult garrire dicitur Diabolus Incarnatus." It is thus that a Council speaks of a Pope!—Gobelinus, p. 311.

the form of the sacrament of penance, in which especially its force is situated, is placed in the words, 'I absolve thee.' (Sess. xiv., cap. 3).

The Catechism of the Council of Trent lays down that "Every sacrament consists of two things:—'matter,' which is called the element; and 'form,' which is commonly called 'the word.' This is the doctrine of the fathers of the Church, upon which the testimony of St. Augustine is familiar to all: 'The word,' says he, 'is joined to the element, and it becomes a sacrament.'"

If any person should pour water on another, that would not be the sacrament of baptism, unless the form of words appointed by Christ were said:—"I baptise thee, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." Just so, there can be no sacrament of penance unless "the form" of words is used—"I absolve thee."

Now, what our readers want to know is this:—whether these words "I absolve thee," were used in the ancient Church or not?

We do think this a most important question. If these words were always used in the ancient Church from the time of Christ and His apostles, then the Church of Rome might have fair grounds to say that Protestants have abolished one of the sacraments of the Gospel which Christ Himself ordained. But if these words, which the Church of Rome now considers essential to her sacrament of penance, were never used in the ancient Church for a THOUSAND YEARS and more after Christ, as Protestants say, then it is equally clear that the so called sacrament, of which these words are an essential part, is an invention of men, and no sacrament of the Gospel of Christ.

This brings the question to a point between the Church of Rome, on the one side, and the Church of England and Ireland, on the other, as well as anything we have seen; and, therefore, we think the question proposed to us is a very good, as well as a very important, question—whether the ancient Church did or did not use the words "I absolve thee" in her forms of absolution; and we shall apply ourselves to it under the same sense of responsibility, and with the same attention to evidence, which governs all our writing.

After careful search, our conviction is that the words "I absolve thee" were never pronounced by man in the Church of God for TWELVE HUNDRED YEARS after the time of Christ, and that, therefore, the sacrament of the Church of Rome, of which these words are an essential part, is an invention of man in very modern times.

To show our readers on what evidence this opinion is founded, we will produce all the ancient formularies of absolution in the ancient Church which we have been able to find.

We steadfastly hold that Christ's ministers have an authority and power from Him to be exercised in the putting away of men's sins; but we also find that for TWELVE hundred years no Christian minister ever thought that this ministry was to be exercised by pronouncing the words "I absolve thee," which are now the essential "form" of absolution in the Church of Rome.

If any of our Roman Catholic correspondents can now produce any formulary of the Church, or any instance in which any priest did ever pronounce these words over a penitent within twelve hundred years after Christ, we presume they will now produce it. We, after careful search, are bold to say that they can produce nothing of the kind. If they can, let them do it; we, in the meantime, will produce the formularies which were used in the early Church.

We take first the forms of the Greek Church, because the Greek formularies are generally older than the Latin. We take the Greek forms from the *Rituale Græcæ* of Jac. Goar, the Pope's missionary to the Greek Churches, shortly before the year 1647.

The one striking characteristic which we find in all the ancient Greek forms of absolution is this—that the Greek Bishops and Fathers, looking steadfastly at the words which our Saviour said to His apostles, "Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them, and whose sins ye retain, they are retained," did thereupon PRAY to God that He would remit the sins of the penitent Himself, but did NEVER take on themselves to say, "I absolve thee."

The first formulary of this kind in Goar is the following prayer, in p. 662:—

"O sovereign Lord our God! O only begotten Son and Word of the Father, who hast broken every chain of our sins by Thy passion, and hast breathed upon the faces of Thy apostles, saying, 'Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; and whose sins ye retain, they are retained;' Thou Sovereign, by Thy holy apostles, hast granted for the time to the ministers in Thy holy Church on earth to put away sins, and to bind and loose every chain of iniquity. We, therefore, pray Thee now for our brother such a one, standing before Thee; grant him Thy mercy, breaking through the chain of his sins, if he has spoken in ignorance or carelessness; or what he has done through infirmity, do Thou, who knowest human weakness, as a humane and good Master, pardon all his sins, willingly and unwillingly committed, because Thou art He who has compassion on those who are bound; who raisest up those who are cast down, the hope of those who have no hope, the rest of the fallen; and deliver Thy servant from the chain of sins."

* Translated by Professor Donovan, of Maynooth, p. 145. Dublin. 1829.

† Ed. Paris. 1647.

* Vide Gobelinus, p. 341, and Von der Hardt.

* Von der Hardt, iv., 329.

* The spot occupied by Huss during this memorable scene is still pointed out in the Cathedral of Constance. It is about half way down the nave, at the right hand, near one of the central pillars.